

Dear Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

I teach English at Norwalk Community College and **am writing in support of HB 5300**, a bill that would provide legislative oversight of any merger within the CSCU System and would prohibit the consolidation of the state's community colleges. The legislature used to have oversight over closings and mergers, and should have that power once more. Oversight is needed because the proposed merger of the community colleges is harming our educational system.

The main reason given for the merger is the need to save money, and yet what has happened is an increase in the number of administrators hired while faculty positions have remained empty. **In the English department at my college, we have dropped from 12 full-time, permanent faculty members 15 years ago down to six currently.** We do not have the faculty members needed to meet our students' needs. Shifting hiring from faculty to administration to support the merger not only fails to save money, but it adds levels of bureaucracy that do not support our core educational mission.

Faculty are also in danger of losing control of the curriculum if the merger should go through. The Board of Regents plans to reduce the number of required core courses and make them the same at all community colleges, which is a bad idea on several levels. **The proposed course requirements for the merged college would reduce the number of required writing courses for students, at a time when the need for students to have strong writing skills is at the highest ever.** We should reject the BOR's plan to decrease the amount of writing instruction our students receive, and instead maintain our current requirements or strengthen them.

The merger would also mean that faculty at individual colleges would lose the ability to create and shape their own courses to meet the needs of their particular students. All courses will be standardized and the requirements simplified. The merger assumes that all students across the state are the same and have the same educational needs, which is not the case. The new core would water down our curriculum and keep each college from being able to respond to the needs of its particular student body, which is a great disservice to all Connecticut students.

Prohibiting consolidation would allow faculty at each college to respond to the needs of students in their area. It would allow us to focus resources on students and faculty -- the people at the core of any college or university -- instead of spending money on upper-level administrators.

Thank you,

Rebecca Hussey
Bethel, Connecticut

